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The place of Place (according to spatial case)

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Abstract

This paper addresses the question whether we should analyze Place, expressing the absence of a change of location, on a par with mode expressions specifying the type of such a change, i. e. Source and Goal. By cross-linguistic study of spatial case systems, various options of analysis are considered and illustrated. It is concluded that languages may differ in their spatial expression of Place, suggesting a non-uniform semantics and, possibly, conceptualization. Also, it is proposed to view these various analyses as diachronic variants.

Keywords: spatial language, Place, mode/directionality, morphological decomposition

1 Introduction¹

If a moving entity is to be localized, it generally does not suffice to merely provide a location.² Instead, it needs to be made clear at which interval of the motion event this *locatum* can be found there. For this, mode expressions such as *to* and *from* can be used (mode is probably better known as *directionality*, a tradition that is not followed here for reasons explained in Lestrade 2011 and 2012). Mode expressions restrict the location of a locatum to a specific interval of the event only, for example to the end point (*Goal*) or to the starting point (*Source*) of the motion event. In the following example, the locatum *John* is said to be *in the house* at the end point of the walking event only by the mode expression *-to*:

- (1) *John walked into the house.*

The question to be addressed in this paper is whether we should acknowledge *Place*, which would then locate the locatum to the location throughout the whole event, as a third distinction of mode on a par with Source and Goal. That is, should we think of

¹ I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for comments and suggestions that helped to improve this paper.

² For original terminology and discussion, see Talmy (1990), Jackendoff (1983), Kracht (2002), Wälchli and Zúñiga (2007), Levinson (2000), and Bateman et al. (2010).

mode as an obligatory dimension, defaulting to Place mode in the absence of motion, or rather as an optional dimension of spatial expressions that is only used if necessary, in combination with motion verbs (only distinguishing Source and Goal)? Before discussing this question in more detail, let us further agree on the terminology: The locations that mode assigns to some point in time are named regions expressed by the *configuration* function, for example ‘in’, ‘under’, and ‘between’. These locations are defined with respect to a reference object called the *ground*. In (1), the configuration is ‘in’ and the house is the ground, therefore the location is the inside of the house; with John being the locatum and the mode being Goal, John is said to be in the house at the end point of the walking event only.

The reason to consider Place as a mode option, something that may seem unnecessary from an English perspective, can be illustrated by the following part of the spatial case paradigm of Hungarian:

(2) Partial Hungarian case paradigm

<i>házon</i>	<i>háza</i>	<i>házára</i>
‘onto the house’	‘on the house’	‘off the house’
(superlative)	(superessive)	(superrelative)

Spatial expressions in Hungarian consistently come in three variants, one for Goal, one for Source, and one for Place (a term that necessarily remains without proper definition in this first part of the paper). This three-way distinction suggests that, morphologically at least, Place may be on a par with Goal and Source in some languages. But whereas analyses of mode all agree on accepting Goal and Source, they differ in whether they recognize Place as a distinction of mode too (Kracht 2002, 2008; Lestrade 2010, 2011) or analyze it as the absence of such a distinction instead (e.g., Jackendoff 1983, 1990; Zwarts 1997, 2005; Wunderlich 1991; Schank 1973).

Intuitively, it could be argued both ways indeed. If mode is defined as restricting the scope of the location (of some locatum) to an interval either before or after a change of location, this function does not apply in the absence of such a change. On the other hand, mode could be argued to be an obligatory ingredient of spatial meaning and/or spatial expressions. In this case, the link between the location and the event time is always made, irrespective of whether they concern stative or motion events, and possibly by zero markers for specific modes for reasons of economy. (The use of zero markers is not as obscure a strategy as it may seem, cf. the use of zero markers for what is called *nominative/absolute* case in many languages; de Hoop and Zwarts 2010; Creissels 2010). Whereas Goal and Source temporally restrict a location to the end

or beginning of an event, Place mode in this view expresses that some location holds for the whole event. The two options are illustrated for English in (3) and (4), example (5) is given for contrast with an overt mode expression.

- (3) Place as the absence of mode (mode is optional)
- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <i>John</i> | <i>is walking</i> | <i>in</i> | <i>the house.</i> |
| locatum | V | configuration:in | ground |
- (4) Place as a distinction of mode (mode is obligatory (and zero marked in English))
- | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <i>John</i> | <i>is walking</i> | \emptyset | <i>in</i> | <i>the house.</i> |
| locatum | V | mode:Place | configuration:in | ground |
- (5) Goal mode (for contrast)
- | | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <i>The cat</i> | <i>is coming</i> | <i>from</i> | <i>under</i> | <i>the table.</i> |
| locatum | V | mode:Source | configuration:under | ground |

In fact, the choice is more complicated: It could be argued that there are three possibilities when barring Place from the mode domain. First, it could simply be the absence of mode as just illustrated in (3). Second, however, Place could be a generalized configuration. In this case, it generalizes over all possible configurations, i. e. ‘in’, ‘under’, etc., expressing that although there necessarily is some configurational relation between the locatum and the ground in the world out there, its linguistic specification is deemed unnecessary (for example because its completely predictable, as is often the case with typical pairings such as between coffee cups and tables). Thirdly, the function of Place could be to change the named region referred to by the configuration into a predicate that establishes the link between a location and the locatum, for exemplifying changing ‘in the house’ into LOC(LOCATUM, IN THE HOUSE). This predicate may then subsequently be specified temporally by mode expressions if necessary. Under this analysis, Place is just another term for the locative function, a semantic function necessary for a compositional semantics of the spatial expression (cf. a.o. Creary, Gawron, & Nerbonne, 1989; Wunderlich, 1991; Zwarts, 1997; Kracht, 2002; Bateman 2010). The different options are illustrated in the abstract in the following examples:³

- (6) Place as the absence of mode:
- [_{mode} {Source, Goal} [_{configuration} {‘in’, ‘under’, etc.}]]
- (7) Place as a generalized location:
- [_{mode} {Source, Goal} [_{configuration} {Place, ‘in’, ‘under’, etc.}]]

³ Square brackets (“[]”) show the scope of the functions mentioned in the subscripts; curly brackets (“{ }”) list the options a function has.

- (8) Place as the locative function:

[_{mode} {Source, Goal}] [_{locative function} Place [_{configuration} {'in', 'under', etc.}]]]

- (9) Place as a distinction of mode:

[_{mode} {Source, Goal, Place}] [_{configuration} {'in', 'under', etc.}]]]

In the next section, these options will be illustrated with concrete cross-linguistic examples. Then also, it will be shown that it is not possible to decide between these options, or rather, that cross-linguistic data suggest that each of these analyses may be true for at least some languages. Accordingly, this paper will argue that although Place may not be a full-fledged distinction in the mode systems of all languages, our analysis of mode should at least leave open the possibility for Place to become one of its distinctions. Importantly for the topic of the present collection of papers, such different morphosyntactic behavior between languages bears on our account of the cognitive representation of spatial meaning: If the spatial systems of languages differ in fundamental ways, we may have to conclude that also our cognitive representation of space is not universal (cf. for example Levinson 1996 and Li and Gleitman 2002).

2 Methodology

To illustrate the different analyses above, we will make use of a method called *morphological decomposition*. This method assumes a fair degree of compositionality between spatial expressions and spatial meaning: If some morpheme can be straightforwardly linked to a semantic function, its very use is taken as evidence for the existence of this function. In fact, we have already used this method in our examples above, suggesting that there is something as Source mode in English on the basis of the use of *from*. As the input for our decomposition exercise, we will consider a number of spatial case systems (for a more elaborate discussion of spatial case inventories and the motivation to use them in studies of spatial language, cf. Lestrade 2012). The reasoning goes as follows. If in a system of paradigmatic oppositions the markers of Place are at the same level as the markers of Goal and Source, we may want to conclude that Place semantically is on a par with Goal and Source too. That is, if Place is mutually exclusive with Goal and Source and all three may be added on top of configuration distinctions, we should probably analyze Place, Goal and Source alike as mode options. If, on the other hand, the markers for Goal and Source morphologically include the marker for Place, this suggests that Place is the input of Goal and Source semantically too.

By deconstructing the spatial expressions into their morphological parts in a number of languages, it will be shown that there is some truth in each of the analyses, or, phrased less optimistically, that the evidence from the morphological decomposition of spatial case is not conclusive to decide once and for all which of the options should be considered the right one. But before we get there, it should be noted that there is an important caveat to this procedure. Morphological markers may be developed over and over again within a stable system of oppositions (Kiparsky 2012) and apparent inclusion relations may only be a coincidence. Therefore, evidence from this method should only be generalized if the results are consistent throughout the spatial expressions between or, depending on the range of the generalization, within languages. Secondly, the interpretation of the results partly depends on whether or not one accepts zero markers. Whereas zero expressions are wholeheartedly accepted by many linguists, they are at the same time forcefully rejected by many others. In general, however, their rejection causes increased complexity or idiosyncrasy at some other point of the analysis. The choice thus seems to be between accepting a zero for a more general semantics vs. a WYSIWYG account at the cost of generality. For present purposes, zero markers are only modestly allowed and avoided whenever possible.

3 Analyses of Place

3.1 Place as the absence of mode

If Place is really the absence of mode, as again schematically represented in (10), it should not appear.⁴ For if Place overtly marked the absence of Goal and Source, we probably would want to analyze it as a mode distinction itself. That is, more generally, whereas specific levels of a function may be defined negatively with respect to other levels (e.g. *that* as ‘not this’), we probably do not expect a linguistic expression to express the absence of an (abstract) function (e.g. *the* in terms of the absence of deixis).

(10) Place as the absence of mode:

[_{mode} {Source, Goal}] [_{configuration} {‘in’, ‘under’, etc.}]]

In some languages, the absence of a change of location is indeed covertly expressed only, and therefore, on the basis of these languages, Place could be said not to exist (“to be the absence of mode”). Rather than using an exotic spatial case paradigm, English prepositions may illustrate this type of mode system:

⁴ The non-existence of a Place marker crucially sets this analysis apart from the others.

(11) *The mouse ran...*

- a. ... *across the floor.*
- b. ... ***from*** *under the table.*
- c. ... ***into*** *its hole.*

Whereas Goal and Source are overtly marked in (11-b,c) as indicated with bold face, there is no additional marking in (11a). The (relevant part of the) English spatial system can thus be represented as follows:

(12) English spatial expressions:

[_{mode} {*from*, *to*(/-*to*)} [_{configuration} {'in', 'under', etc.}]]

In this analysis, the absence of Goal and Source is taken to correspond to the absence of the mode function in general.

3.2 Place as a generalized configuration

If place is a generalized configuration, it should not occur in combination with more specific configurations, as these should be mutually exclusive: From a functional perspective, it does not make much sense to standardly, that is, not as a restatement but as the normal way of expression, mark something in general and at the same time express it in more detail too (cf. **a vehicle car*, for an attempt to illustrate with a lexical example). According to this analysis, Place always substitutes more specific configurations. The abstract semantic representation is repeated as (13) for convenience.

(13) Place as a generalized location:

[_{mode} {Source, Goal} [_{configuration} {Place, 'in', 'under', etc.}]]

Although Place in principle may be expressed covertly under this analysis, it could then also be argued to favor the type of analysis to be discussed next. Therefore, we will only consider *overt* instances of generalized configurations in this section.

The locative suffix *-(i)ng* in Tswana (a Niger-Congo language spoken in South Africa) could be analyzed as a generalized configuration. Tswana has a subset of nouns used in spatial function without the addition of the locative case marker. Spatial configurations are specified by means of prepositions that are historically locational nouns (Denis Creissels, p.c.). These constructions, from which the locative case marker is lacking, are used if the configuration needs to be expressed explicitly:

Tswana (Creissels, p.c.)

- (14) *morago ga lebota*
 behind GEN wall
 ‘behind the wall’

The locative suffix does not appear on top of such configuration markers but seems to be used in their stead, when a more specific expression is considered superfluous. Consider the following examples.

(15) Tswana (Creissels, 2006a, 23)

- a. *Monna o dule motse-ng.*
 man s3:1 leave.PFT 3village-LOC
 ‘The man left the village.’
- b. *Monna o ile noke-ng.*
 man s3:1 go.PFT 9river-LOC
 ‘The man went to the river.’

The configurational interpretation of the locative suffix depends on the type of ground (probably ‘in’ for villages and ‘at’ for rivers); Mode is contributed by the motion verb (Source in (15a) and Goal in (15b)). Note that not all verbs of movement are able to contribute Goal or Source mode (cf. Reshöft and Lestrade 2013 for more elaborate discussion on spatial-meaning dimensions expressed by motion verbs). Verbs that mostly express manner of motion, such as *taboga* ‘run’, *akofa* ‘hurry’, *fofa* ‘fly’, and *feta* ‘pass’, do not contribute mode:

Tswana (Creissels, 2004, 11)

- (16) *Ke tlaa taboga ko tsele-ng*
 s1s FUT run-FIN DISTANT 9road-LOC
 ‘I will run on the road’

In sum, in Tswana the locative suffix *-(i)ng* seems to be used to generalize over specific configurations. If more specific configurations are expressed, it is not used. Also, it does not add any mode meaning whatsoever, a function that seems restricted to motion verbs (or applicative markers, cf. Creissels 2004).

3.3 Place as the locative function

To tell apart an analysis of Place as the locative function and the previous analysis, its expression should occur between mode expressions and overt configuration expressions:

(17) Place as the locative function:

[_{mode}{Source,Goal}] [_{locative function} Place [_{configuration} {'in', 'under', etc.}]]

In spatial systems of this type, Source and Goal systematically have to be built on top of Place, which intervenes between mode and configuration expressions. Although in principle here too Place may be expressed by a zero marker, we will not consider this scenario as we then cannot distinguished the present from the previous analysis.

Consider the following examples from Malayalam:

(18) Malayalam (Asher & Kumari, 1997)

- a. *Avan viṭṭ-il uṇṭə.*
He house-LOC be.PRES
'He is at home.' (p. 225)
- b. *Niṇṇaḷkkə kiṭakkay-il kiṭakkaam; allenkil paayayil kiṭakkaam.*
you-DAT bed-LOC lie-PERMISS otherwise mat-LOC
lie.PERMISS
'You can lie on the bed or you can lie on the mat.' (p. 139)
- c. *Addeham innale talayoolapparamp-ileekkə*
he.HON yesterday Thalyolaparambu-ALL
pooyi.
go.PAST
'He went to Thalyolaparambu yesterday.' (p. 182)
- d. *Avan viṭṭ-il ninnə innale vannu.*
he house-LOC from yesterday come.PAST
'He came from home yesterday.' (p. 226)

The locative case marker *-il* in the first two examples generalizes over whatever specific configurations may hold in the real world between the locatum and the ground ('in' in (18a) vs. 'on' in (18b)). Goal and Source expressions are added on top of this marker: The allative Goal marker in (18-c) can easily be decomposed into the locative marker plus *-eekkə* and the Source postposition *ninnə* is used in addition to the locative case in (18-d). Thus, the markers for Goal and Source are both added on top of the suffix *-il*, which does not seem to express any specific configuration itself, but whose interpretation rather seems dependent on the type of ground. So far then, the locative case in Malayalam behaves similar to that in Tswana, which was argued to have the locative function.

Very differently from the situation in Tswana, however, the combination of configurational expressions and Place seems very well possible in Malayalam, suggesting that the analysis of Place as a generalized configuration may not be right. The locative marker can be recognized in many configurational expressions, such as *mupil* ‘in front of’ and *pinnil* ‘behind’ (although this is not always possible, cf. *mite* ‘above’, *meel* ‘on’), and also examples of the “complete” structure in (17), using both mode, locative function, and configuration, are easily found, as illustrated for Source in (18):

- (19) *Avan vaatilinre pinn-il ninnə vannu.*
 he door-GEN behind-LOC from come.PAST
 ‘He came from behind the door.’

These combinatory possibilities then suggest an analysis in terms of the locative function. Note however that if we analyze the locative marker in Malayalam in terms of the locative function, the linguistic specification of configuration has to be optional, as it would then be lacking from (16a-b). (Again, reduced complexity at one level causes increased complexity at some other place.)

3.4 Place as a distinction of mode

Finally, Place could be a full-fledged mode distinction. In this case, we expect it to be mutually exclusive with Source and Goal, all three being expressed on top of configuration expressions:

- (20) [mode {Source, Goal, Place} [configuration {‘in’, ‘under’, etc.}]]

A pattern that suggests this type of analysis can be observed in Northern Akhvakh. Creissels (2009, 5) shows that the spatial case paradigm of Northern Akhvakh can be decomposed into a configuration and mode marker. As illustrated in Table 1, the spatial paradigm consists of complex markers that combine a configurational and a mode morpheme. For example, the Place morpheme *-e/i* is put on top the configuration *-l̄* ‘under’ to express ‘under’; if the Source marker *-a(je)* is added to this configuration instead, we get ‘from under’.

Crucially, Northern Akhvakh has an independent Place marker on top of the configuration markers that is in complementary distribution with the other mode markers. We can observe similar patterns in the spatial case paradigms of for example Hungarian and Finnish. Since Place patterns with the other mode distinctions in these systems, one could argue that it is a mode distinction too.

	Place	Source	Goal
default configuration	-g-e	-g-a(je)	-g-u(ne)
‘in the vicinity of’	-χar-i	-l̄ir-a(je)	-χar-u(ne)
a. ‘in a relatively narrow space’ b. ‘distributed or diffused localization’	-q̄-e	-q̄-a(je)	-q̄-u(ne)
‘under’	-l̄-i	-l̄-a(je)	-l̄-u(ne)
a. ‘in a filled dense space’ b. ‘on a non-horizontal surface’	-l̄-i	-l̄-a(je)	-l̄-u(ne)

Table 1: Northern Akhvakh spatial case paradigm

Slightly more complex evidence can be derived by considering the case forms of the spatial adpositions of these languages. Hungarian has ten spatial cases in total, distinguishing three mode options for three very general configuration distinctions (approximated by ‘in’, ‘at’, and ‘on’; only the latter of which was illustrated in Section 1) and having an additional terminative case that does not combine with these three configurations. In addition, Hungarian can make use of adpositions to express spatial meaning. The stems of these spatial postpositions express specific configuration distinctions, whereas their case forms specify mode. This is illustrated in the following example (cf. also Creissels 2006b and Stolz 1992):

(21) Hungarian (Hegedűs 2008, 221)

- a. *a ház mellett*
the house beside.PLACE
‘beside the house’
- b. *a ház mellé*
the house beside.GOAL
‘(to) beside the house’
- c. *a ház mellől*
the house beside.SOURCE
‘from beside the house’

As shown in (21), the adposition stem expresses configuration whereas its different case forms distinguish between modes. Thus, instead of combining with all ten spatial cases that are available in Hungarian, the case paradigm of Hungarian postpositions only makes a three-way mode distinction.⁵ This reduced spatial case paradigm can easily be explained from a functional perspective: Spatial adpositions in Hungarian make

⁵ We find a comparable situation in Finnish, discussed in Lestrade 2010. For a cross-linguistic overview of the distribution of labor between cases and adpositions within complex spatial PPs, cf. Lestrade et al. 2011.

a much more fine-grained distinction in configuration than spatial cases. The very general configuration distinctions that are made by the nominal spatial case paradigm are therefore redundant on adpositions and only a mode distinction is necessary (cf. also the argumentation in Section 3.2). Importantly, Place is one of the mode distinctions that are formally distinguished in the case paradigms of these adpositions, not one of the configuration distinctions that are omitted. This again suggests that, in Hungarian, Place belongs to the mode domain, taking configurations as its input.

4 Discussion

Above, we have seen evidence for different proposals for the analysis of Place. In this section an attempt is made to link these various systems in a diachronic sketch of the possible development of Place.

It can be hypothesized that Place first emerges in a language as the result of a grammaticalization process in which the most frequently used configurational expression grammaticalized to such an extent that it no longer inherently expressed any distinction whatsoever (cf. a.o. Lehmann, 1985). Place, at this stage, has become a generalized configuration, its locative function and mode interpretation resulting from contextual enrichment. In the development of new configuration markers, necessary to communicate specific configurational meaning, Place-as-a-generalized-configuration could be used to explicitly mark these markers for their new role. Thus, Place comes to express the locative function. Malayalam, discussed in Section 3.3, possibly could be said to illustrate this transition stage. In a next stage of grammaticalization, a language may develop a morphological mode system to provide a temporal specification of this Place-with-the-locative-function in combination with motion events. Languages may develop a Source marker that restricts the Locative function to a (time) interval before a change and/or a Goal marker that restricts it to an interval after a change. Since Source and Goal have the Locative function as their default input, their markers can either be used on top of the former locative marker (reflecting their semantic relation), or in contrast with it (as the default input of a function need not be expressed).

Interestingly, the two case systems that emerge at this point in our sketch nicely correspond to the syncretism patterns that are attested cross-linguistically. If only a two-way mode distinction is made with a special Source marker, the former locative marker will come to express non-Source mode, i. e. be compatible with Place and Goal. If, on the other hand, a two-way mode distinction is made with a special Goal marker

only, the former locative marker expresses non-Goal mode, i. e. Place and Source. What is not expected is the development of a mode function that only says that the locative function should be linked to a motion event instead of a stative one. As explained in the introduction, this is not very informative and therefore such a marker is unlikely to develop. Indeed, virtually the only attested spatial syncretism patterns are between Place and Source or Place and Goal (cf. Stolz 1992; Creissels 2009; Pantcheva 2010; Lestrade 2010; cf. Kutscher 2010 for a synchronous exception that can be explained away via phonological attrition). If a second mode distinction is developed (Source, if Goal was already there and vice versa), the Place-with-the-locative-function marker will first express Place by pragmatic reasoning only: If the location is not restricted to a subinterval, it is interpreted as holding throughout the event. Eventually, however, Place-with-the-locative-function can be expected to end up expressing a mode distinction directly by semantic strengthening, that is, by not deriving the Place-as-a-mode interpretation indirectly, but by establishing the link in its lexical semantics. Thus, Place-as-a-mode could be considered to be the fossilized version of Place-with-the-locative function and should only emerge in mode systems in which the two other basic modes Goal and Source are developed first (cf. Wilkins and Hill 1995 for such a diachronic relation between a “pragmatic” and a “semantic” phase; cf. Blutner 2007 for a similar use of the notion *fossilization*).

The following example may illustrate this last stage of the development in progress. As shown in (22b) for Goal only, in Imonda the markers for Goal and Source are used on top of the Place marker, whose independent use is illustrated in (22a). However, as (22c) shows, sometimes it is possible to omit the latter and use the Goal marker directly on the ground.

(22) Imonda (Seiler 1965)

- a. *iéf-ia*
house-LOC
'at the house' (p. 71)
- b. *Iéf-ia-m* *ka* *uagl-f*.
house-LOC-Goal I go-PRES
'I am going home.' (p. 161)
- c. *Ně-m* *at* *uagl-n*.
bush-Goal COM go-PAST
'He has gone to the bush.' (p. 161)

The optionality of the locative marker could be understood as the beginning of a process in which the Place marker changes from the input of the modes Goal and Source into a mode distinction proper: If (22a) and (22c) are contrasted, one could say that Place and Goal are developing a complementary distribution, which may subsequently lead to their equivalent status semantically.

5 Conclusion

This paper discussed the status of Place markers in a cross-linguistic sample of spatial-case inventories. It was proposed that a uniform analysis of Place cannot be given but that languages may have very different spatial systems instead. In some, Place should be considered a generalized location, in others, it can have a locative function explicitly establishing the link between locatum a location, and in again other languages, Place may function as a full-fledged mode distinction contrasting with Goal and Source meanings that are universally accepted as modes. Thus, in some languages the mode dimension is obligatorily marked whereas in others this is only done when deemed necessary.

The different options were hypothesized to be diachronic variants rather than (onto)-logical opposites. Place may start out as the result of the interpretation of the locative function in a system of pragmatic contrasts with Source and Goal. From this, it can be expected to develop its own inherent mode semantics by pragmatic strengthening.

Whether this grammaticalization hypothesis is right or wrong, our semantic representations of spatial meaning should probably at least have the possibility of allowing Place as mode distinction to account for the variation described here.

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